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TO BUDDLECOMBE AND BACK.

BY F. C. BURNAND,

AUTHOR OF "HAPPY THOUGHTS," "HAPPY THOUGHT HALL," "THE NEW HISTORY OF SANDFORD AND MERTON," ETC.

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TO BUDDLECOMBE AND BACK.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE CHIEF OF THE ABORIGINAL WIDEAWAKES, AND WHAT RESULTED FROM A MEETING OF THEIR GRAND LODGE.

FRED KERRICK had the unenviable reputation of being a practical joker.

Appreciated at first by those who had not been his victims, he was invited out in all directions; and few convivial parties, or country-house gatherings, were considered perfect, unless Fred Kerrick was among the guests. He was like the advertised Court Guide or Directory, "without which no gentleman's library is complete."

After a time, however, when the hosts and hostesses found that their hospitalities were no defence against Fred's playing his tricks on themselves, his popularity began to wane; and thenceforth his practical jokes seemed

rather to be suggested by a desire of malicious annoyance, than to result from irrepressible animal spirits. What he had begun as an amateur, he continued gravely as a professional. Practical joking seemed to be the business of his life.

When Fred was in your company, you never could feel sure of not having a card with "Kick me," or "This style seven-and-six," either fastened to your coat-tail buttons, or pinned on somewhere out of your own sight and reach, but evident to everybody else.

In conversation with Fred, the safest position was with your back to the wall, and a full front to the enemy. He had learned sleight-of-hand, and was capable of taking a breast-pin out of the scarf of the person with whom he was talking, if the latter were only sufficiently unsuspecting to be allowed to have his gaze directed, even for a second, away from Mr. Fred's movements. In hotels, he would go round at night, and change the boots and shoes; so that Number Sixteen, first floor, would next morning find himself trying to put on the boots of Number Fifty-six, second

floor, while the owner of the latter would be ringing wildly for the "boots," to tell him that he had given him the wrong shoes, and that if he didn't have his right ones in five minutes he should miss his train. Sawdust in hats and umbrellas; strawberries on any chair where there might be a chance of a gentleman in light trousers seating himself; sewing up the lining in the arm of a dress-coat, and putting on the clock so that the unfortunate man should double his energy to tear through the difficulties; misplacing a methodical man's shirts, handkerchiefs, and boots; putting mild fireworks in cigars, — and other such amusing tricks were to Fred Kerrick merely the A B C of practical jokes.

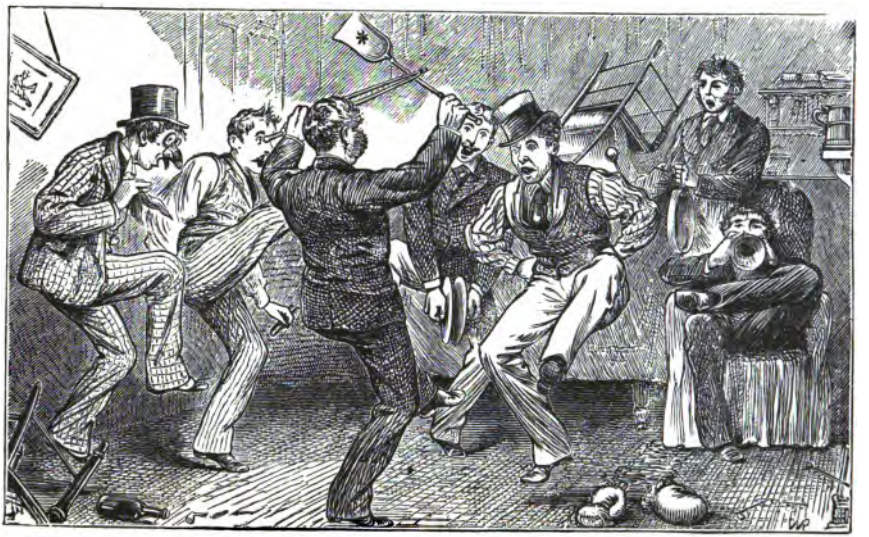
He had originated an idea, — a school for practical joking. He issued prospectuses to all his acquaintances, with terms and lists of lectures. The notion was taken up, and Fred's "course of studies" were well attended by a certain section of young men who went in for larks, and who considered the greatest fun to consist in noisy suppers, rowdyism, and being generally wide awake.

These disciples of Fred formed a society, or school, called "The Wideawakes," not only on account of their assumed superiority in astuteness over the rest of mankind, but also because their "life" commenced when most respectable and orderly persons were preparing to retire to bed.

They styled their convivial meetings in one another's rooms "Lodges;" invented secret signs by which one Wideawake should recognize another Wideawake, when meeting in any distant quarter of the globe; and never broke up without a maniacal chorus, and what Fred termed "The Aboriginal War-dance of the White-skinned Wideawakes."

That such an eccentric creature as this should ever succumb to the influence of love seemed impossible. Yet his turn came. Fred was pierced to the heart by the bright eyes of Miss Dolly Specklebury; whom he met, for the first time, dressed as a milkmaid, *à la Watteau*, at a fancy-dress ball at the Brighton Pavilion.

On this occasion, it was certainly no very easy matter for the dart of Cupid to touch



The Aboriginal War-dance of the White-skinned Wideawakes.

his heart, as it was protected by nothing thicker than an Indian's tight-skin dress, covered with such ornaments as the toy-shops of the London Crystal Palace, or the Lowther Arcade, could afford to produce at a penny apiece; consisting of dolls' heads and arms, whistles, tops, and so forth; while over his arm he carried a child's wooden hoop.

He took care that the local papers should describe him next day as "Mr. Frederick Kerrick, in the costume of an Aboriginal Wideawake of the time of Charles the First, with his native war-hoop."

He had followed up the advantage of an introduction, by obtaining permission to call at Mr. Specklebury's; where he tried his best to render himself most agreeable to Miss Dolly's aunt, and her papa.

With the latter he invariably agreed upon every point, especially legal points; and flattered him by asking his opinion on all sorts of imaginary difficulties, which he invented for the sake of conversation.

For Miss Specklebury and her niece he

procured tickets for various amusements, and relieved Mr. Specklebury of a great deal of trouble, by being his responsible *locum tenens* on such occasions.

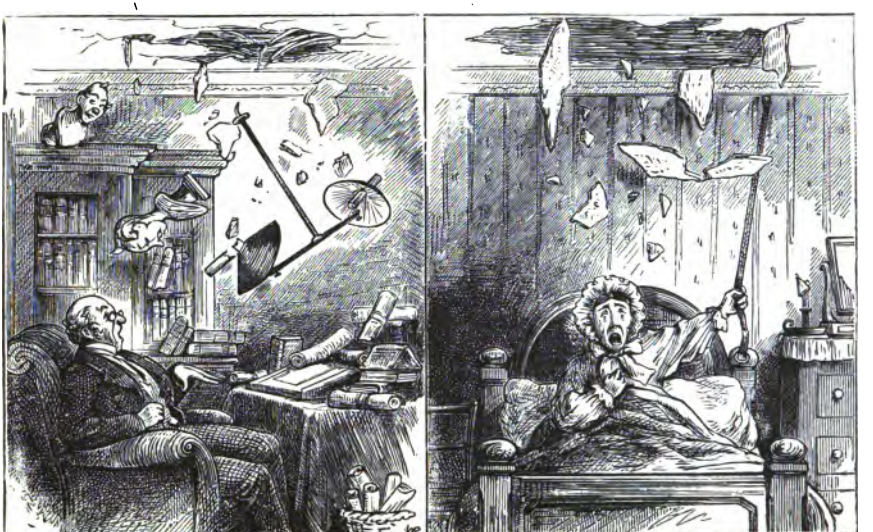
He flattered himself that he had succeeded in winning Miss Dolly's affections; but this only proved that he did not as yet know much of Miss Dolly. He considered that her aunt was devoted to his interests, which showed that he did not as yet know Miss Specklebury; and, as he considered that the women ruled *pater-familias*, he, from first to last, omitted Mr. Specklebury from his calculations, and so reckoned without his host.

Every thing was going on apparently quite smoothly, when an event happened, not in any way out of the ordinary course of Mr. Kerrick's life, which, as he afterwards emphatically expressed it, "quite upset the cart."

He had been unwilling to give up his Practical-Joking Meetings; and so it came about that the Wideawakes, "according to annual custom" (as the tradesmen print on their Christmas bills), held their Great Lodge in Fred's chambers. It was a grand occasion.

Three novices were to be initiated into all the rites and ceremonies.

As we are not concerned with the precise nature of these mystic solemnities, we will not dwell upon them; except so far as to intimate that the candidate for admission was blindfolded, his hands bound behind him, and his legs shackled: wise precautions in the case of unruly spirits, who might object to being whacked over the head and back with bladders tied to short sticks, as used in pantomimes, and being otherwise ignominiously maltreated. The secret, with which the first initiated was intrusted, was, simply, that, on his word of honor, he would not reveal to any other novice what the ceremony was that he himself had gone through; and would, on issuing from the apartment, express his immense delight and gratification at having become a Wideawake. Festivities and fireworks set in later in the evening, and the other lodgers, above and below, were roused from their peaceful slumbers by a strong smell of gunpowder, wild shrieks, banging of a gong, and various unmusical instruments; while



Festivities and fireworks set in later in the evening, and the other lodgers, above and below, were roused from their peaceful slumbers.

old Mrs. Mudge, the porter's wife, testified subsequently to her having been frightened out of her wits by three awful figures in large heads, standing in the passage, when she and her husband were rung up by the startled residents at three in the morning.

The next day there was lodged with Mudge, the porter, a formal complaint to be presented to Mr. Hardwicke, the agent, and through him to be placed in the hands of Mr. Fubsby, the landlord.

And this is what brought Mr. Hardwicke to Mr. Fubsby's study, where we now find him seated.

CHAPTER II.

AVUNCULUS — TOTUS, TERES, ATQUE ROTUNDUS. — TWO CONSULTATIONS.

"IF Mr. Kerrick remains," said the agent, "the property is ruined."

"Hum!" said Uncle Fubsby to himself. He was known as "Uncle Fubsby" by everybody who really *did* know him.

"Rents, sir, are rising everywhere in the neighborhood, and, if Mr. Kerrick goes out, you'll get half as much again as he was giving," urged the agent.

"Shall I?" said Uncle Fubsby, leaning back in his chair, and regarding the ceiling as though he were doing an invisible sum in arithmetic on the whitewashed surface.

"If *he* doesn't go, — I mean if he isn't turned out, — every one will quit," said the agent, emphatically.

"How many tenants are there?"

"Four."

"And for each of these I shall, on your own showing, receive half as much again as I get at present," said Uncle Fubsby, still engaged on his invisible sum.

"True, sir," answered Mr. Hardwicke, rather taken aback; "but you forget the damage. The report will get about, if Mr. Kerrick is allowed to remain. Mudge and his wife will spread it; the ex-lodgers will spread it; in fact it will be like the haunted house in B— Square, of great value, but unletable."

Uncle Fubsby considered. He was just about to give his opinion, or ask a question, when the servant announced Dr. Jeffrey.

"Excuse me a few minutes," said Uncle Fubsby to the agent.

"Certainly, sir," answered the agent, making his exit, as the doctor, a cheery-looking man, entered.

"Well, sir," said the doctor, "and how are you? Looking well, I'm glad to say. You seem," the doctor went on heartily, "to have got quite round again."

Got quite round! If he had been a ball,

Uncle Fubsby couldn't have been much rounder. His facetious friends used to say he was the only circular they took in.

Uncle Fubsby was undoubtedly a round man. He would have suited a grotesque artist requiring a model for Humpty Dumpty, though he showed more dumptiness than humptiness. He had a round head, a round face, and round eyes, a round nose, and a round chin, and a round mouth; also little round ears. He had small round hands on which he rather prided himself, round dimpled fingers, and round nails trimmed so carefully as to indicate to the observant eye that their owner was a man with considerable leisure at command; for none but those so enviably circumstanced can have time for bestowing that amount of attention on their nails, which a Dutch gardener gives to his trees and tulips. Uncle Fubsby possessed a high color, expressing a caloric, or rather a choleric, temperature. He was as much middle-aged as any respectable, well-to-do, and comfortably-off uncle ought to be; and, to his surprise, he had had, within the last few years, a few admoni-

tory twinges of gout, which had slightly disturbed his equanimity, but as yet had left no visible effect on his rotundity; for he was still what is called now-a-days, though used in a different sense, "a good all-round man."

And he lived in a square; as Victor Hugo would add, "The Round Man in a Square!" and leave his reader to pause, after the explosion, and wonder what the writer meant.

A little out-of-the-way London square, in the St. Pancras district, with a gentlemanly statue, in the centre, of somebody who had benefited somebody, or had become great, and escaped the gallows only to be gibbeted in this out-of-the-way locality. The oldest inhabitant knew nothing of the effigy's history, and the youngest inhabitant had no curiosity on the subject. As it is not, however, with the square that we have now to do, except just to show the sort of place which Uncle Fubsby had chosen for his residence in London, it is enough to say that the position was sufficiently central for a bachelor of a hospitable character. The house was old-fashioned, and roomy for a party-giver; and, as the

rent was reasonable, he was neither over-housed nor over-rented. The especial attraction which the house possessed for Uncle Fubsby was that it contained a very large room built out at the back, which his nephew, Tom Lennard, could use for the double purpose of an artistic studio and a billiard-room. An apartment capable of containing a tin-box and an easel would have sufficed Tom for a studio, his art being limited by his inclination for work; but both uncle and nephew, and the guests who came to dinner, were fond of a game of billiards. "And," said Uncle Fubsby to his doctor, "it keeps a young man at home."

"And the gout keeps an elderly man at home," observed the doctor.

"Precisely," returned Uncle Fubsby; "and, as it has not hitherto crippled me, I can get all the exercise I want round the table. Morally and physically I approve of billiards."

"Or whist," said the doctor.

"Whist is not to be compared to billiards. There's no physical exercise in whist. No: whist may be a good antidote to marriage,

may keep a man out of the society of females, may prevent him from making a foolish match; but it does not tend to keep the player in the same equable state of health as does a game at billiards."

"Well," observed Dr. Jeffrey, rising, "you take my advice."

"I always do," said Uncle Fubsby; "at all events," he thought to himself, "I pay for it."

"You do; and see how much better you are as long as you act upon it. Now, what I recommend is, that you should spend at least four of the best months of the year — from May to September — at some charming place on the coast."

"I dislike Brighton," said Uncle Fubsby, "and all the regular fashionable watering-places."

"Choose an irregular one, then," said the doctor. "Tell your nephew to think it out. He's artistic. It will suit him. Go away, both of you. It will do you all the good in the world."

"All the good in the world!" sighed Uncle Fubsby; "I'm afraid that's not much."

"Why! you must have been jilted once," exclaimed the doctor, laughingly.

Uncle Fubsby made no reply, but, as they were at the door, opened it, nodded, saw the doctor step into his brougham; and then, after closing the street door, returned slowly and thoughtfully to his own particular room, which he called his study.

The agent re-entered. He was ready to take up the thread of his discourse where he had left off. In the interim he had made up his mind that the objectionable tenant must be served with a notice.

"Depreciation of the property for business purposes," said Mr. Fubsby's agent, in confidence to his employer, — "maybe this is Mr. Kerrick's object."

"Then," observed Uncle Fubsby, "we must give him notice to quit."

"Certainly, Mr. Fubsby, and at once," replied the agent, promptly making a note in his pocket-book.

"Unless," observed Uncle Fubsby, relenting, "he gives us assurances for his good behavior."

The agent shook his head. This was too grave a matter to be trifled with. Besides, to allow Mr. Kerrick to continue was against his, the agent's, own interests; and therefore out the offender must come, neck and crop, or the property wouldn't be worth a sixpence towards the end of two years.

"Who knows, sir," said the agent, "but what such an eccentric person as this Mr. Kerrick may burn the place down?"

"It's insured," said Uncle Fubsby, briefly.

"True, sir; but a fire injures the reputation of a place almost as much as a fever. And then the rebuilding—"

"Ah!" sighed Uncle Fubsby. "Yes, well; then you see to it, Mr. Hardwicke, and give him due notice."

And due notice Mr. Fred Kerrick received accordingly.

When Uncle Fubsby was once more alone, he sat down at his desk.

"I *do* want change," he said to himself. "My gout *is* getting worse. It must be cured somehow. Can it? That's the question. The doctor said I'd been jilted. It's

hard to be jilted at twenty, and have the gout at fifty; and no one to take care of me — except Tom."

During this soliloquy he had slowly opened a small drawer in his desk, and had taken out a miniature of a young girl attired according to the fashion of twenty-five years ago.

On the back of the miniature was engraved the name of "Adela."

"Uncle!" cried a hearty voice at the door.

Uncle Fubsby did not instantly reply. He replaced the portrait in the drawer, paused, sighed.

Then he answered, "Come in."

CHAPTER III.

THE CHIEF OF THE ABORIGINAL WIDEAWAKES IS ASTONISHED. — MR. SPECKLEBURY IN COUNCIL. — A BRISK EXIT.

WHEN Mr. Frederick Kerrick received formal notice to quit, he fell into a violent passion, and gave vent to as many unmentionable words as, if the penalty of five shillings had been inflicted each time, would have made the fortune of a police court's poor-box.

To be told that, by common consent, he had been adjudged a public nuisance, and as such unfit for the civilized society found in bachelors' chambers, and to be therefore formally expelled, was enough to ruffle, to say the least, the most philosophic temperament. But, when the person thus rudely ordered to Coventry is a practical joker, the sting is all the sharper. At first he was for assembling his Wideawakes in full council, and taking into consideration the best means for being re-

venged, either on the tenants who had not the courage to complain to him personally, or on the porter and his wife who had "sneaked;" and, in either case, on the landlord who had dared to attempt to expel him without a hearing. On second thought, it struck him that he would take this opportunity of asking Mr. Specklebury's opinion on his legal position; and, in stating his case, he would be careful to suppress his own part in the Wideawake Lodges, and to deprecate the boisterous hilarity of his young friends, who had, in spite of his entreaties, thus misbehaved themselves on only one occasion. It would be an opportunity for him to present Specklebury with his own views on the value of home comforts, including a wife.

In short, he saw his way to bringing the conversation to a matrimonial issue. And carried away by this idea, he called on Mr. Specklebury; had a brief interview with Miss Dolly; a longer one with Miss Dolly and her aunt; and the longest with Mr. Specklebury himself, who delivered his opinion oracularly, and challenged the world to prove him wrong.

Mr. Specklebury was a most determined and impulsive man. His favorite study had been the law. He had been intended by his parents for a solicitor, but had never practised. Probably, therefore, Nature had *not* destined him for this career, and had, in the long run, been victorious over his parents. He was now fifty-one, and could himself boast of never in his life having taken any one's advice. He had invariably acted upon his own opinion. The number of opinions with which he had furnished himself and his friends would have made an enormous fortune for any ordinary solicitor, reckoning them at six and eight pence apiece; but having money of his own, and not relying on his profession, he contented himself with giving advice to others, and, which is not often the case, taking it himself. To his own thinking, no one's opinion was worth a rap to him, personally. He often asked what an acquaintance or friend thought of such and such a thing, or how he or she would act in such and such a case; but, as to any service their replies might be to him, he might as well have been

stone deaf. His theory was, that all law was based on common sense. Of this latter quality he considered himself to possess a large stock, — so large, in fact, as to overflow, and be of inestimable service to his friends, "if," as he said, "they would only act on my advice."

He considered himself the most logical man of his acquaintance, also the wisest, also the best-read in legal knowledge; and his criticisms on the speeches of the law lords, the decisions of the Queen's Bench, and the utterances of the House of Commons' lawyers, were things to hear — once.

He ruled his household, he said, with strict justice, and guarded his daughter's future by logical deductions.

On this occasion he delivered himself of a long oration on the right of property, the law of landlord and tenant, of rack rent and fee-simple, until the practical joker scarcely knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. But one thing was perfectly certain, — that Mr. Specklebury had not once mentioned matrimony or his daughter; nor had he, in fact, offered any conversational opportunity

for approaching the subject nearest Mr. Kerrick's heart.

"You shall be reinstated, Mr. Kerrick," said Mr. Specklebury, emphatically, "if I know any thing of the rights of Englishmen. Who is the landlord?"

"The agent's name is Hardwicke," said Fred, who did not much relish the very practical turn his affairs appeared to be taking.

"Hardwicke is the agent," repeated Mr. Specklebury, sententiously. "Yes, but the landlord?"

"The landlord, I think," answered Freddy, cautiously, — and he *did* think before answering in full, as he began to see himself egged on into a lawsuit; however, as an instant's reflection told him that concealment of the landlord's name could only be temporary, and be of no sort of use, out he came with it, — "the landlord's name is Fubsby."

"Fubsby! exclaimed Mr. Specklebury, frowning, and rising portentously from his seat.

"Fubsby!" he repeated, taking up his hat, which he put on in a determined manner.

"Fubsby!" he exclaimed a third time, taking his umbrella and gloves.

Frederick wondered what on earth was going to happen. Was he going out to lay an information against Fubsby, or to thrash Fubsby with his umbrella?

"You stay here till I return," said Mr. Specklebury; and out he went into the hall.

The front door slammed; Mr. Specklebury had gone out.

Freddy joined the ladies, but felt considerably unsettled by Mr. Specklebury's extraordinary conduct.

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW. — BUDDLECOMBE IN VIEW. — DIFFICULTIES AND DOUBTS. — DECISION. — AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

TOM LENNARD was a strongly built, broad-shouldered young fellow, with a pair of bright eyes, and chestnut hair that clung to his head like ivy to a tree. Twenty-horse steam power working a mechanical arrangement of brushes and combs couldn't have effected a permanent parting in those wiry curls. When he came out of the sea, after a header or two, his hair reminded you of the crisp coat of an Irish retriever. It invested him with what at first might strike you as an air of surprise; but, on becoming accustomed to his face, you would see that what you had taken for "surprise" was an intelligence so perpetually on the alert as to protect its possessor against the probability of being taken unawares.

Well-proportioned, with no predisposition to corpulency, and as square as Uncle Fubsby was round, Tom Lennard was as unlike his worthy relative as any one, without being a nephew, could be.

The question of his relationship was a puzzle to those who chose to think it over; and there will always be a certain number of people who will feel interested in any thing, on the sole condition that in no sort of way can it possibly concern them.

The opinions were, firstly, that Uncle Fubsby's youngest sister had made a *mésalliance;* places and dates quite unknown, but of course the offender's name must have been Lennard, and therefore Tom's father. Secondly, that there had been a *mésalliance* in the Fubsby family, names, places, and dates unknown; that Tom was the result, and Lennard a name invented by Uncle Fubsby: parents supposed to be dead. Thirdly, a variation on the above theme, with all that made it at all respectable omitted. Fourthly, that Uncle Fubsby had early in life made what is called "a fool of himself;" that there had been

secretly an Aunt Fubsby, and that Lennard was the maiden name of Tom's mother.

Two things were certain; namely, that Uncle Fubsby styled Tom his nephew, and treated him as his heir. As for Tom himself, he was perfectly satisfied with his uncle's account of his coming into existence. It was enough for Tom that Uncle Fubsby was not every one's uncle, but was his, Tom's, special property. For the rest, Tom received a sufficiently handsome allowance, was encouraged to pursue his favorite art, and was free to invite any number of friends to partake of the hospitalities of his uncle's table, to play a game of billiards, and assist in passing many a pleasant winter's evening in his uncle's house. Uncle Fubsby's in fact soon came to be a place "to drop in at," when Tom's friends had nothing better to do; and it was wonderful how often they found themselves without any thing better to do, and therefore on their road to Uncle Fubsby's.

They were all fond of the little round old gentleman, although the gout was just beginning to tell on his temper.

"Uncle," said Tom, coming into the room, "there's a charming cottage to be let on the coast of Cornwall, close to magnificent bathing at a small watering-place that has only just sprung into being. I've seen sketches of it. Lovely! let's go."

Uncle Fubsby was somewhat taken aback by his nephew's impulsiveness. It almost galvanized the gout out of him. He considered.

"Doctor Jeffrey," said Uncle Fubsby, as though communing with himself, "told me I ought to go away."

"And now's the time!" cried Tom.

"Hum!" said Uncle Fubsby, rubbing his knees; "I don't dispute the fact of 'now' being 'the time.' There is no time like the now-time; but is it *our* time? Is it time for us to be moving?"

"Why not?" asked Tom.

"Why not?" returned his uncle. "Well, first, because you are very well where you are" —

"I should be better at Buddlecombe," said Tom.

"How do you know that?" inquired his uncle.

"I feel it!" replied Tom, enthusiastically. "I feel the fresh Atlantic breezes, as I speak of the place. I feel that I am inhaling ozone; that I breathe a new life. I feel that I have but to be within sight of such grand rocks and heights as those of Tintagel, to evoke within me all the artist's spirit, all the power" —

"Ah!" interrupted Uncle Fubsby, "I see; you are projecting an artistic tour, with a pedestrian's knapsack. What's to become of me with my foot?"

"I am not thinking of a tour," answered Tom; "only of staying at this cottage, going out sketching while you lounge on the pier, or the quay, or whatever it is; sitting in the sun, enjoying the fresh breeze, and reading your newspaper."

"It sounds well," observed Uncle Fubsby; "but when you say 'reading my newspaper,' won't it be rather a difficult matter to get a paper in such an outlandish place? Now, if I remember, Buddlecombe is nearly as far as the Land's End."

"And, if so," rejoined his nephew, "what of that? What in this nineteenth century is distance? The electric telegraph, like love, makes all places alike."

"But the electric telegraph doesn't send the newspapers at the same time to every place in the United Kingdom. As to the nineteenth century and our means of communication, it strikes me as a curious sign of the times, that, when railways are converting all England into an iron net-work, we should be writing and speaking about the breed of our horses, and resuscitating our old coaches, too, with first-rate teams, on the old coach roads of a hundred years ago."

"The Buddlecombe coach has just been done away with," Tom remarked.

"Is there a Buddlecombe station?" asked his uncle.

"Yes," answered Tom. "Postal delivery once a day.

"Good."

"And *The Times* every day at six P.M.," continued Tom; and then, seeing the elongation of his uncle's face at this announcement, he

hastened to add: "And what can be better? Dinner at 6.30, when we can talk over yesterday's universal, and to-day's local, news; then we take our coffee, our walk in the evening with a cigar, back to a pipe, and comfortably sit down to study *The Times* sheet by sheet; exhaust it and yourself thoroughly, then off to bed. Next morning, another yesterday's paper, just as a penny supplement, after breakfast; walk out, sit in the sun, meditate on human life and the politics of the world, look through a telescope, talk to a fisherman, watch the children and the nursery-maids, inhale ozone, feel the gout oozing out of you, appetite rising, and back to lunch."

"It sounds well. And where will you be all the time?"

"Sketching. I intend to exhibit at the Dudley, in sea-water colors."

"I am glad to hear it. You should now, my boy, be trying to secure your own independence. The surest way of doing that is to propose to yourself the best work, and stick to it."

"Of course. And then in Cornwall, as in

Brittany, there is a remnant of costume. The girls" —

"Hang the girls!" growled Uncle Fubsby, testily.

"Hang them by all means," cried Tom merrily; "only let 'em be hung well, in the Dudley, high priced, and marked 'Sold.'"

"You'll never make an independence if you are thinking of pretty faces," said Uncle Fubsby.

"You mean, uncle, if I marry, I suppose? Of course, the married man has ceased to be independent. No, no; time enough for that, when Destiny says to me 'thus far and no farther.'"

"If Destiny said 'thus far and no father-in-law,' it would be kinder of her," said Uncle Fubsby, essaying a pun.

Tom compassionated him.

"Uncle," he said, "the sooner you get away from this atmosphere the better. Are you aware that you have lowered yourself to the status of a pickpocket?"

"And so said Doctor Johnson," hummed Uncle Fubsby, who had punned himself into a good humor.

"When shall we start?" asked Tom.

"If the day after to-morrow be fine"—Uncle Fubsby commenced.

"Good enough!" cried Tom; "I'm there!" by which he meant, in the slang of the day, that his uncle's compliance exactly suited his own plans, and that he was ready to set off at a moment's notice.

"Stop!" cried Uncle Fubsby, as Tom was leaving the room.

Tom paused.

"Do not tell *everybody* where we are going," said Uncle Fubsby.

"Certainly not," answered Tom. "Only a few, a very few, friends."

"Stick to that, to friends only, and we sha'n't be crowded," rejoined Uncle Fubsby. "Friends at a distance," he added, quoting the marriage notices in the papers, "will please accept this intimation; and—keep their distance, as a rule."

Then an idea seemed to strike him.

"The Speckleburys are not going down there?" he asked anxiously.

"Not that I know of," answered his nephew, carelessly.

"Are you sure?"

"I will inquire."

"Do; but mind, Tom, if the Speckleburys are to be there, Buddlecombe won't suit *me*. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, uncle. I know what you're alluding to; but really your fears are groundless. Miss Specklebury may have aimed at *me*, but I don't care one rap for her."

"On your word?"

"On my word."

"You have greatly relieved me," said his uncle. "Old Specklebury himself is such a nuisance; his maiden sister is another nuisance; the daughter is flighty and flirty, horribly flirty; and, at one time, the thought that you might be entrapped by a female Specklebury, and our quiet household invaded by a Specklebury swarm, including unknown samples of the tribe, and Speckleburys *in futuro*, was too much for me. Tom, *that* aggravated my gout."

"My dear uncle"—

"No necessity for another word. I trust you for three things,—not to propose without

first asking me; not to fall in love with any one beneath you in station; and to avoid any thing of the genus Specklebury."

"Uncle, I am not passion-proof. I hope I shall not do any thing that would in any way displease you. One thing I promise and vow, in my own name, that no Specklebury shall ever"—

The servant entered the room, and announced "Mr. Specklebury."

Uncle and nephew frowned, and regarded one another as if requiring each other's assistance in a difficulty.

"Why didn't you say I was engaged?" Uncle Fubsby asked the servant.

The servant, a neat maid, replied that he, Mr. Fubsby, hadn't so instructed her; but on the contrary had told her that, if any one called, he was at home.

"True," muttered Fubsby, who had only expected a visit from Dr. Jeffrey.

"Mr. Specklebury's in the droring room, sir," said the maid.

"Alone?" asked Uncle Fubsby.

"Yes, sir."

"Thank goodness for *that* at all events," he muttered as the servant withdrew. "That sister of his would catch *me*, if she could. I know her."

Tom laughed.

"It's nothing to laugh at," growled Uncle Fubsby, getting out of his comfortable dressing-gown, and shivering in a frock coat.

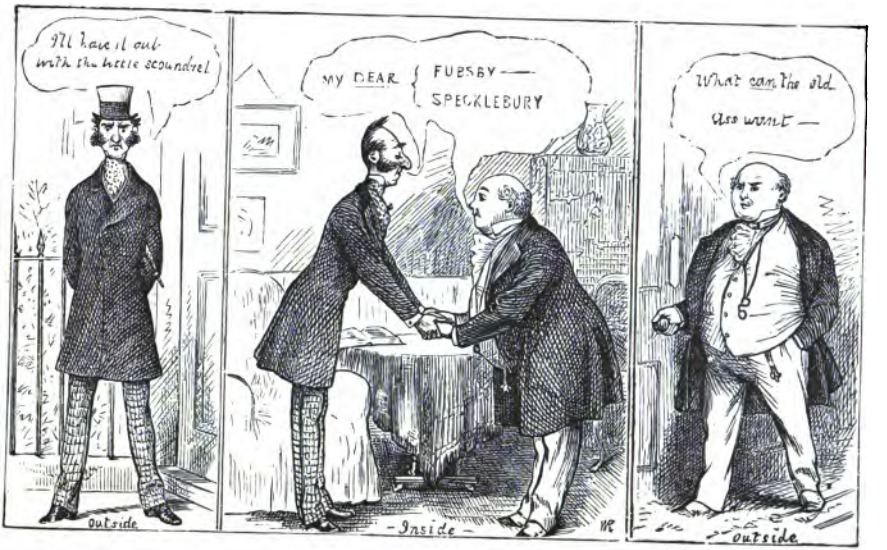
"You don't affectionate her much, do you?" asked Tom.

"No; and I don't care about that obstinate old idiot, Specklebury, either. Wonder what on earth he wants?"

Then, growling to himself, Uncle Fubsby slowly ascended the stairs, wishing, after half-a-dozen steps, that he had seen his friend Specklebury anywhere or somewhere, rather than in the drawing-room; or that, at all events, he had received him in the streets, or had thought of his gout as an apology for not receiving him at all. And so generally anathematizing servants' stupidity, and the obtrusiveness of objectionable people, he turned the handle, and entered the drawing-room.

Mr. Specklebury, who was amusing himself with a photograph book, looked up.

"My dear Specklebury," cried Uncle Fubsby, with effusion, "how are you? I'm so glad to see you! Sit down."


I'll have it out with the little scoundrel
Outside
MY DEAR { FUDSBY — SPECKLEBURY
Inside
What can the old Ass want —
Outside

CHAPTER V.

MR. FRED KERRICK QUITS HIS CHAMBERS. — AN INTERLOPER — HE REGISTERS A VOW.

A SPECIAL meeting of the Wideawakes had been convened. The Lodge, if not actually broken up, was at all events to be closed for the present, and the re-opening to be adjourned *sine die.*

The president was going away. He was upset; he had been wounded in his most tender point. Mr. Specklebury, after his interview with Uncle Fubsby, had instituted inquiries; had seen the porter and his wife at Mr. Kerrick's chambers; had visited Mr. Hardwicke the agent; and had decided that so rackety and reckless a young gentleman was not the man to whom Miss Dolly Specklebury's future could be safely intrusted.

Therefore, when Mr. Fred Kerrick called at the Specklebury's at luncheon-time, he re-

ceived only the cold shoulder; and the second time he was only admitted to the presence of Mr. Specklebury; while on the third occasion, although he could have sworn to having seen Miss Dolly and her aunt at the drawing-room window just as his hand was on the visitor's bell, he was assured by the pert servant-maid that everybody was "not at home." He received no more invitations to their parties; Miss Dolly indeed bowed to him from a private box one evening, and thereby encouraged a hope that if he were now repelled by papa he had not been given up by the daughter. But, as we before observed, Mr. Freddy did not know Miss Dolly Specklebury.

Some weeks after the above-mentioned bit of sly flirtation on the part of Miss Dolly, some one in a friendly way informed Fred Kerrick that a certain Mr. Lionel Minniver — a young gentleman of good position, small brains, and large means — was *now* always about with Miss Dolly, and that "the affair was considered a certainty."

In fact old Specklebury had been congratulated by some other old boys, at his Club, on

his judicious choice of a son-in-law; and so it came round to Fred Kerrick's ears.

Whereupon Mr. Frederick vowed vengeance, first against Fubsby, secondly against Mr. Specklebury and family, and thirdly against the inoffensive millionnaire, Mr. Lionel Minniver.

His plans, if any, he kept to himself, lest even the most solemn vows of the Wideawakes might not prevent them, if once in his confidence, from divulging them.

The Aboriginal Wideawakes spent one last and glorious night in their chief's wigwam on the second floor. The tenants above and below trembled in their beds, and the Mudges dared not interfere. At six in the morning on quarter-day, the last of the Wideawakes quitted the chieftain's tent, the chieftain himself departing somewhat later with all his baggage.

He left for the Lakes the next day, intending to make a tour of England, returning by the west and south coasts.

We shall meet him once again before returning to town.

CHAPTER VI.

THREE MONTHS AT BUDDLECOMBE. — HOW UNCLE FUBSBY ENJOYED HIMSELF.

UNCLE FUBSBY and Nephew Tom Lennard have been at Buddlecombe, in Cornwall, nearly three months. They had found an undeniable charm in its solitude, its wild coast, its magnificent sea, its glorious sunsets. The air sought out Uncle Fubsby's gout, so that every day he became more and more irritable, vowing that he would a hundred times rather be at home. But an occasional letter from Dr. Jeffrey, assuring him that "he would be so vastly benefited by the change as to be on his return quite another man," considerably comforted him; "though what other man I'm to be," he observed to Tom Lennard, "I don't exactly know."

So regularly every morning he went down to the Quay of Buddlecombe, and read yesterday's newspaper. The weather was delicious.

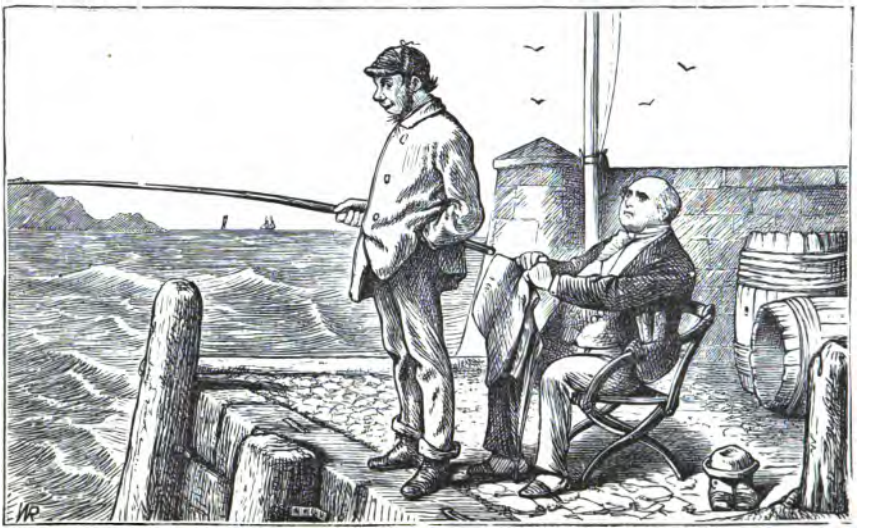
Only one thing, as regularly as he went down to that spot, ruffled Uncle Fubsby's temper, and brought out his gout in pretty strong language. "A stupid idiot of a fellow," Uncle Fubsby complained, "will always come fishing just in front of me when I'm reading the paper. I shift my seat; he shifts his position. He will get in my light somehow. I've told him a hundred times, if I've told him once, to go away; but he's half daft, I think, or half deaf, or both, and there he stays fishing over the side of the quay, — what for, Heaven only knows, I don't."

"Does he never catch any thing?" asked Tom.

"No," was his uncle's reply; "but he will one of these days. 'Pon my soul he *does* make me so angry that I'm often on the very point of giving him such a kick."

"If you did," said Tom, laughing, "he'd tumble into about eighteen feet of water, and have about as far to fall before he got there."

"Serve him right," grumbled Uncle Fubsby; "he is such a fool. I complained to the policeman, — the *one* policeman whom I see



"A stupid idiot of a fellow," Uncle Fubsby complained, "will always come fishing just in front of me when I'm reading the paper."

about here occasionally, — and he only replied that the fellow had as much right to be there as I had."

"True."

"Quite."

"Why don't you choose another spot, and move when he comes?"

"Well, I like the place. It's not too far. It's sunny, breezy, and the sight of the waves is invigorating."

"Ah, there *are* waves here, coming in with spent Atlantic force at all hours. Our calmest day here would be considered rough at Brighton."

"Yes; and when I sit on that sort of quay place, I seem to have the whole sea before me. Then I take off my boots, put on my easy shoes, take off my hat to let the sea breeze play on my forehead — I do believe it's a hair restorer — and when I've opened my umbrella, settled into my portable easy chair, and spread out my *Times* ready cut for perusal, with one or two more papers in my pocket, you may imagine I don't want to move in a hurry."

Mr. Tom had been using his pencil quickly. He now held up a sketch, at the same time quoting Hamlet: "So, uncle! there you are!"

"Good! why, you've put the idiot in the picture, too. Can't he be kept even out of *that?*"

"He's picturesque."

"Um. Yes, you're fond of the picturesque — in figures." Uncle Fubsby had opened his nephew's portfolio. "This, then?" He was holding up the picture of a beautiful girl, a brunette, with large dark eyes, who peeping from under a shawl seemed a type of Spanish rather than of English beauty.

Tom Lennard, luckily for himself, had his back to the light, or his uncle would have seen such a color rising to his nephew's face as would have rendered any answer unnecessary.

"She's a girl near here; living at a farm, I think. She's well educated;" and he tried to appear careless and indifferent.

Uncle Fubsby scarcely heard what his nephew was saying. He had fallen into a reverie. The girl's face recalled some past event, — or *the* past event of his life; and he

was silent. Was Tom Lennard travelling along the same road?

Tom looked at his watch.

"I am going down to bathe, and finish my sketch of the Frog Rock."

"The Frog Rock and the sea will wait," said Uncle Fubsby, wishing to chat.

"Ah!" replied Tom, "but the light won't."

Uncle Fubsby had nothing to object to this view of the question; so packing up the newspapers, his umbrella and camp stool in hand, he set out for his usual resting-place; while Tom, after watching him well on his way, turned for the cottage in exactly the opposite direction.

True, the light wouldn't wait for him; but there was a light that was already waiting for him in the cave near the Frog Rock; and that light had for him the attraction that only could be possessed by a pair of lovely dark eyes, becoming brighter as their gaze fell on him approaching.

In a few minutes Tom Lennard was in the Lover's Cave, hidden away by the huge grotesque Frog Rock; and the plashing waves played the accompaniment to Love's Duet.

CHAPTER VII.

STILL AT BUDDLECOMBE. — NEWS FROM TOWN. — CONSOLATION AND AFFLICTION. — THE POETRY. — THE RENDEZVOUS. — THE LETTER.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom Lennard at breakfast, as he put down a letter which he had been reading.

"What is it?" asked Uncle Fubsby. Uncle Fubsby, with the gout coming out of him, was becoming more and more irritable every day. In the early morning his humor was a dangerous one. He was not, Tom Lennard felt, an uncle to be trifled with.

"This letter's from Lionel Minniver," answered Tom, by way of preface.

"He's an empty-headed, conceited young ass," growled Uncle Fubsby. "What's he got to say for himself?"

"He's going to be married."

"Bah! he's fool enough for any thing."

Tom did not feel inclined to argue the question involved in this remark.

His uncle continued: "Surely that wasn't the news that made you cry out 'By Jove!'"

"No; it wasn't. Whom do you think he's going to marry?"

"Hate riddles," said Uncle Fubsby, breaking his egg at too low a point, and losing a quarter of the yolk, besides making a mess over his clean plate. He disliked what he termed "messing." He would hardly pardon it, even in himself; if he did make an excuse for himself, the blame fell heavily on the egg, or the spoon, or the egg-cup. In this instance it lighted on the spoon. "What a great stupid idiot of a spoon!" exclaimed Uncle Fubsby.

"Yes," answered his nephew, thinking the description exactly suited to Lionel Minniver. "But perhaps he might have done worse."

"Who?"

"Minniver."

"Oh, ah!—yes; *that* spoon. Well, who's the girl?"

"Dolly Specklebury."

Uncle Fubsby was pleased. Minniver was sacrificed instead of his nephew. "So far so good," he thought to himself. Then he said aloud, —

"Gad! she'll lead him a nice life. However, there's lots of money. He's a young Crœsus. It's a poor thing for *her*, by the way. And," he added to himself, "a good thing for you, young man," — meaning Tom Lennard.

"Well," observed Tom, who had his own reasons for harping on the subject, and striking different notes and chords, "if they love one another, it'll be all right."

"If they *continue* to love one another, you mean — Oh!" and Uncle Fubsby felt a twinge.

"And, if they don't at first, they may arrive at it," said Tom.

"They may. Only you can't love on compulsion; and marriage, remember, *binds* two people together. You're too young to have seen the old melodrama of the *Bottle-Imp*. The Fiend, a hideous-looking creature, played I think by O. Smith, at the Adelphi" —

"I just remember him," put in Tom.

"Ah, but not in this. He used to start up, and, spreading his arms over his victim, exclaim in an awful voice, 'You must *learn* to love me!'"

"But we don't marry Bottle-Imps."

"Don't we? We marry — I mean some of us do — fiends of temper, for example. And how the deuce can one tell what a man or woman really is by merely seeing them in the dim time of a short courtship, when love is as blind as a two-days-old puppy? Ah!" and again he had a twinge, which produced on his features the sort of grimace one sees in the Rowlandson school of caricatures, representing "Taking Physic," "Headache," and other such-like cheerful subjects.

"Minniver *is* rather a muff," observed Tom, glancing at the letter, "for he encloses me some lines, of which he is evidently very proud. They are addressed 'To my adored one — A Proposal.'"

"If, 'stead of 'Yes,' thou sayest 'No,'
If, 'stead of 'Stay,' thou bid'st me 'Go,'

Then to the sad sea wave I'll hie,
And there I'll lay me down and die.
For love of thee! for love of thee!
My sweetest one! for love of thee!
What tho' relations frown and scoff,
With thee alone would I run off."

"Bosh!" interposed Uncle Fubsby, "as if he had expected to elope with the entire Speckle-bury family! Go on. He is an idiot."

Tom continued:—

"With thee, with thee, I long to live
In bliss which thou alone canst give.
I live for thee! I live for thee!
My sweetest one! I live for thee!
Then meet me when the moon so bright
Sheds o'er the wave her silvery light,
By Heaven I swear, whate'er betide,
That thou shalt be my own, my bride.
I live for thee! I live for thee!
My sweetest one! I live for thee!"

"There's no more, I hope," said Uncle Fubsby. "At all events, if there is, marriage will soon take all the poetry out of him."

"Perhaps, uncle," observed Tom rather maliciously, "if you'd been married, you wouldn't have had the gout."

Mr. Fubsby frowned.

"There are just two lines more which he calls 'A Souvenir.'"

> "When you hear the name of Nineveh,
> Think of me, your
> LIONEL MINNIVER."

"It's worth keeping as a curiosity," said Tom, folding up the paper, and putting it in his pocket.

"Well, I'm off to read the paper. I do believe my gout's worse than ever to-day. If that obstinate, pig-headed Cornish yokel comes in my light and irritates me, on my word I think I shall brain him with my umbrella, or throw my boot at him."

"I'll see you down to your usual perch," said Tom, offering his uncle an arm.

"Thank you. You don't favor me with your company for very long in the day."

"My work" —

"Bah! you don't sketch *after* sunset."

"Some of the finest effects are to be caught after sunset, uncle," urged Tom.

"Are they?" growled his relative, as he hobbled on his way. "I'm afraid there's metal

more attractive for you than *mine.* Oh!" — twinge. "All I say is, and I speak from experience, *tell me first.*"

Tom made no response. Having seen his uncle comfortably fixed for the day, he turned toward the Frog Rock.

Should he tell Uncle Fubsby or not? That was one question. Another was, What was there to tell? Was this more than a flirtation? Alice Kemp was the loveliest and the sweetest girl he had ever met. But what was she? The daughter of a couple of Cornish peasants, taken up by the clergyman's wife, fairly educated, and now a humble teacher in the village school. Did he love her? That was what he was debating with himself. One question he did *not* debate with himself; and that was, Did *she* love him? Unfortunately, of *that* he felt certain. Was he about to make a fool of himself? Better this than that he should injure her, so pure, and besides so simple, so full of confidence.

Tom had resolved that their meeting this day should be the last. This had been his resolution every day for the last three weeks.

"Now," he said to himself, "I am determined either to break it off (and," he added, in his inner self, "I know I shan't do that), or to engage myself to her, and then — tell my uncle. After all, in spite of his prejudices, he's very kind, very sensible, and very fond of me. I'm sure he'll come round. If he had only got over his confounded gout, and hadn't been so irritable, I believe I should have told him every thing a month ago."

Thus meditating, he approached the trysting place. It was untenanted. No Alice. He was before his time, perhaps; no, nearly five minutes after it. She had never failed him before! What could this mean?

If any thing could have set the seal on the determination he had so recently arrived at, it was her absence.

An hour passed, and she did not appear.

Tom sat down, with his sketch-book and colors by his side, and began to write her a letter.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCLE FUBSBY ON THE QUAY. — IRRITATED. — VEXATION. — THE IDIOT. — ANNOYANCE. — INCREASING ANNOYANCE. — THE BITE. — THE FISH. — THE IMPULSE. — TABLEAU.

UNCLE FUBSBY could not make himself comfortable. In vain he sat this way and that way, hobbled from one corner to another, changed his attitude; sat with his hat on, with his hat off; with his shoe on his gouty foot, with it off; with his umbrella up, with his umbrella down, — no, he could not satisfy himself.

He was feverish, and his irritability was increasing alarmingly.

The newspaper, too, had not been cut this morning: it wouldn't allow itself to be unfolded conveniently. "Why on earth," he growled testily, "don't they cut newspapers? Why isn't there a tax on uncut books and

papers?" Then the wind was shifty, and would come to his assistance, as it were, and help him to unfold the paper. First, it blew it *at* him and smothered him, taking the impression of his nose and chin like a plaster cast; then it blew it away playfully from him, taking it almost out of his hand; then, just as he was settling down to something interesting in the leading article, came slyly round a corner (the frisky breeze having shifted three points at least in thirty seconds), made the newspaper rustle and shake, so that Uncle Fubsby began to experience an unpleasant sensation of biliousness while endeavoring to fix his attention on any one paragraph.

Then, opposite him stood a great gawk of a bumpkin, grinning from ear to ear at *him*.

"What are you laughing at, you idiot?" shouted Uncle Fubsby, quite losing his temper under the influence of sun, wind, and gout.

"Ee-se-er," grinned the fool, who had an old fishing-rod in his hand, and was casting his line over the side of the quay into the bright, dancing water below.

"Fool," grunted Uncle Fubsby, making another dash at his paper, and turning his back to the sun.

The booby with the fishing-line at the same time changed *his* position, so as to cast a shadow on the news of the day.

"Can't you stand out of the light?" cried Uncle Fubsby, angrily.

The booby grinned, and made a reply which might have been thoroughly satisfactory, had Uncle Fubsby understood pure Cornish.

At all events the man did not seem inclined to budge. But what irritated Uncle Fubsby more than any thing was to notice that his idiotic tormentor was evidently taking a lively pleasure in annoying him, and was grinning from ear to ear.

Uncle Fubsby drew his chair nearer to the edge of the quay, and stretched out his gouty foot, thus to a certain extent barring his unwelcome companion's passage.

The man grinned more than ever at this, pointed at the gouty shoe, sniggered, and walked to the corner away from Uncle Fubsby.

"Hope he'll stop there, ill-mannered savage!" muttered Uncle Fubsby between his set teeth, as he spread his journal in order to make a sort of screen between himself and his persecutor.

He recommenced reading. He was disturbed by a series of chuckles, clearly from the idiot, which seemed to be getting louder and louder. Uncle Fubsby was suffering from the worst attack of gout he had had as yet.

"It's coming out of me!" he exclaimed aloud, as, writhing under the torture, he was unable to suppress a shriek, or more correctly a loud squeak of agony; such a sound as might be expected to come from a Punch in a fit.

At this moment he heard a chuckle of diabolical delight from the object of his increasing detestation, who seemed to be rejoicing in his sufferings. Uncle Fubsby looked over the top of his paper, and saw the man walking backwards toward him, trailing his line, and evidently enjoying some joke of his own amazingly.

Nearer and nearer he was approaching, playing his rod. He had caught something,

and was engrossed, not in watching Uncle Fubsby's torments, but those of some unfortunate fish, — a big one, too, as appeared from the bending of the rod and the tightening of the line. It was clearly a fight between the man and the fish.

The man had the best of it. With a shout of triumph he grasped the rod with both hands, jerked it violently upwards, and threw his body well back, so as to counterpoise the weight of the huge fish, — "for huge it certainly must be," thought Uncle Fubsby, becoming interested, — when suddenly the rod yielded to the strain, snapped sharply in the middle, and the man, losing his balance, in order to save himself from the fall stepped backwards, heavily and wildly, on Uncle Fubsby's gouty foot. The fearful pain shot through Uncle Fubsby's body with the force of three galvanic batteries. There was the yell of agony, — a starting up of an agonized body, an umbrella flourished for the space of a flash of lightning in the air, the sound of a blow, then of a heavy splash, — and Uncle Fubsby stood on the quay *alone.*

The man, losing his balance, in order to save himself from the fall stepped backwards, heavily and wildly, on Uncle Fubsby's gouty foot.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. KERRICK TO THE RESCUE.

By the special arrangements of the goddess, Chance, for this occasion only, Mr. Frederick Kerrick alighted at the door of the small inn kept at Buddlecombe by Mrs. Kemp, proprietress of bathing machines and donkeys; the wife of daft Johnny Kemp, and the nearest relation of pretty Alice Kemp, the teacher in the village school. Mr. Kerrick had nearly finished his tour, and was returning to town in consequence of having not only received intelligence of the approaching marriage between Mr. Minniver and Miss Specklebury, but having actually been favored with an invitation. What could this mean? Did Miss Dolly care for him, or was it only on a piece with the rest of her flirtations?

While sitting at his open window revolving these things in his mighty mind, his attention

was attracted to a discussion going on below, of which, though it was partly carried on in the Cornish vernacular, he was soon able to understand its gist. The speakers were the landlady and a young woman whom she addressed as "Ally."

"I'm right glad I didn't let'ee go to-day to that thar Frog Rock, — leastways not without me."

"My dear Aunty" —

"I won't have it. I've made a downright fule o' myself by marryin' a man like Johnny Kemp, an' I don't choose as you should du the same."

"But he as good as asked me to marry him" —

"As good as!" exclaimed the elder woman, in a tone of supreme contempt. "As good as! What's the use of that? If he means marriage, let him say so, and not come sneaking about here, trying to deceive a girl who has no more sense than a baby, or that fule, Johnny Kemp. What's he mean by this?" and she produced a paper.

"It was meant for me, Aunty. I told you

he expected to meet me, and when he found I didn't come to my time he went away and left this."

"I ain't no scholard, thank Heaven," said Mrs. Kemp, "but I won't trust *you* to read this to me. I'll have some 'un as I can trust."

Now, happening to look about her for this ideal personage, her mental eye fell on Mr. Kerrick.

Followed by her niece, she went up to his room, and in a few minutes had placed the difficulty before him; had explained how a well-to-do young man from London had been making up to her niece, how she (Mrs. Kemp) had prevented their meeting on this particular occasion, had accompanied Alice to the trysting place, intending to bring the young man to book, but had only found in an envelope addressed to Alice a lot of writing — "poetry," Alice called it — which she would be much obliged by her lodger reading to her.

Fred Kerrick complied. The verses undoubtedly seemed to suggest elopement, but undoubtedly promised marriage. The last

Followed by her niece, she went up to his room, and in a few minutes had placed the difficulty before him.

couplet, under the heading "A Souvenir," however, clearly indicated that the writer was about to absent himself, and wished to dwell on his beloved one's memory. What was Fred Kerrick's surprise when he came to the signature of Lionel Minniver.

"Minniver!" he exclaimed, "why I know Minniver."

"You do, sir?" said both women, while the younger one looked at him imploringly.

"Yes, I know him very well, — at least I thought I knew him very well; but I know him better now," replied Fred Kerrick, thinking how he could turn this, if not to his own advantage, at all events to the considerable disadvantage of his successful rival.

"He's well-to-do, I s'pose, sir," observed Mrs. Kemp, inquiringly.

"He's very rich," answered Mr. Kerrick.

Alice sighed. Mrs. Kemp sniffed triumphantly. She had caught a prize — or nearly. All her care and labor in bringing up Alice would now be rewarded.

"Then," said Mrs. Kemp, emphatically, "the sooner we find him the better."

But Alice refused to give any information on the subject. She would not be a party to forcing herself on her lover.

"But, my dear girl," said Mr. Kerrick, "Mr. Minniver is to my certain knowledge engaged to be married" —

Alice turned deadly pale. Mrs. Kemp, supporting her, asked if the lodger was sure of the fact.

"Sure!" returned Kerrick. "Your niece can read?"

"She teaches," said Mrs. Kemp, with pride.

"Well, — let her read *that*," and he produced the Specklebury's invitation to the wedding of their daughter with Mr. Lionel Minniver.

"In a week's time he will be a married man."

Poor Alice could scarcely speak.

"Where's that fule, Johnny?" asked her aunt, adding, "he might be of some service now."

The words were scarcely uttered, when a common fisherman came up to the gate, and, calling out for Mrs. Kemp, informed her that

Johnny had fallen into the water about an hour ago — "got a' fightin,'" he, the fisherman, thought — and, having been fished out half-drowned and wet through to the bone, had been placed by him (the fisherman) in his own cabin, wrapped up warm, with a glass of something hot, and left there till his clothes should be dry again.

Leaving Alice to recover from the sudden shock, Mrs. Kemp set out to see her husband and to go straight with him to wherever Mr. Lionel Minniver might be lodging. The result of this search was that in two hours' time she returned to the inn, not having been able to hear of any such person in the neighborhood. No one in Buddlecombe knew Mr. Lionel Minniver.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Fred Kerrick, whose becoming interest in the case was increasing with the growing mystery, — "perhaps he was here under an assumed name."

"He certainly never told me his name was Minniver or Lionel," said Alice. "He told me he was Tom Lennard."

"An assumed name, I'll swear," said Kerrick.

"He's a villain, whatever his name may be," said Mrs. Kemp, "and the sooner I see a lawyer the better."

"But why," asked Kerrick, "don't you send your husband to find out some one called Tom Lennard?"

"He's such a fule, and just now his head's full of water. He's talking such nonsense that I du believe he's got water on the brain. Here, Johnny!"

Johnny answered the summons. It is, of course, needless to say that it was *he* who had been the victim of Uncle Fubsby's momentary frenzy; and even now he was from time to time shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog after a bath, and banging the side of his head with his fist to get, as he said, the water out of his ear.

Of course he told *his* story. Mrs. Kemp told him he was a "bigger fule" than even *she* had taken him for (and she had taken him for better or worse), and asked him why he hadn't at once gone and "took out a summons against the man, and have him up."

"Don't you know his name, man?" she asked, petulantly.

Yes, he did. The little round old man used to come down regularly every day, and interfere with his fishing. He hated the old fool, said Johnny, because he frightened all the fish away. He'd asked his name, and he knew where he lived, "and he was going to have the law on him, he was."

After some considerable rambling, it turned out that Johnny had ascertained that his assailant's name was, as the reader already knows, "Fubsby."

Once more Kerrick started up. By Heavens! he knew him too.

"What a clever gentleman!" said Mrs. Kemp. "He knows every one. Quite a godsend to us."

Kerrick saw his way intuitively. Fubsby had turned him out of his chambers for being disorderly; now was the opportunity for retaliation, — a tremendous opportunity not to be lost.

Minniver, who had cut him out with Dolly Specklebury, had been making love to this young Cornish girl; nay, in his own handwriting had promised marriage. Why, he

had only to set in action the law on Fubsby, and on Minniver, and, — well, he didn't quite see the end of it, but at all events lawyer's letters would make both parties considerably uncomfortable; and to turn the tables on his enemies in this way — to kill two birds at one discharge of a doublebarrel — would be the best and most satisfactory practical joke, for *him* at least, that Mr. Kerrick had had for many a day.

CHAPTER X.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW. — MUTUAL CONFIDENCES. — DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES. — COMING EVENTS.

UNCLE FUBSBY and his nephew were seated in the chambers lately vacated by Fred Kerrick.

"One thing's certain," said Tom.

"What's that?" asked Uncle Fubsby.

"Why," answered his nephew, "the fright has cured you. Your gout has completely disappeared."

It had. But Uncle Fubsby was a thinner and sadder man.

"Yes," said Uncle Fubsby, shaking his head; "that's true. But this state of continual nervous agitation will be too much for me."

Tom Lennard did not immediately answer. He had his own affairs to consider, and his uncle's sudden return to town had entirely

upset all his plans. Besides, he was in doubt, in grave doubt, as to what Alice would think of his conduct. While he was writing that letter to her on his last visit to the cave, his uncle had suddenly rushed in upon him, told him there was no time to be lost, that he had rendered himself liable to an action for assault, or perhaps a criminal prosecution, and that he must leave Buddlecombe by the very next train. Tom had just time to put, as he thought, his letter in an envelope and leave it on the rock. On arriving in London, he found to his disgust that he had by mistake enclosed Minniver's letter for his own. He had immediately written to Alice, but had received no reply. Again he wrote; no result. Now the question was what should he do, — tell his uncle every thing and return to Buddlecombe; or go to Buddlecombe first, ascertain how matters stood, and then make a clean breast of it? They had been back just four days, and absence had inflamed his passion. In this state of uncertainty he sat and thought, fearful of inadvertently betraying himself.

"If there is one thing I dread," said Uncle Fubsby, "it is an action. I'd rather pay any thing than be made a party to an action. The publicity, not to mention the worry, would kill me. I saw the fool scramble up on to the huge life-buoy, and I knew he wasn't drowned."

"If you like," suggested Tom, "I could run down and make inquiries."

"Not on any account," answered his uncle. "Don't stir the mud. By the way, I'm not sorry this has happened on *your* account, Tom. I'm not sure that you weren't laying yourself out for a breach of promise case."

Tom laughed uncomfortably.

His uncle resumed gravely: "I haven't forgotten that girl's picture in your portfolio. The face has haunted me, and strangely enough on account of its likeness to — to "— he hesitated.

"To whom, uncle?" inquired Tom, considerably interested.

"Well — Tom, I'll tell you. It's as like as it can be to the only girl I ever cared about, years ago. You can judge for yourself," —

and from the drawer of his writing table he produced a miniature we have already noticed.

Tom was struck by the extraordinary resemblance. "Yes," he said, as if speaking to himself, "it is wonderfully like."

He scarcely dared to ask her history, as he carefully returned the portrait to his uncle.

"No, Tom," said Mr. Fubsby, as he consigned the picture to the drawer, "I don't want you to make a fool of yourself, as *I* did. I'd have ruined myself for her; and to this day I firmly believe she really loved me, and not the villain who somehow or other got her into his power, and with whom she eloped."

"She married him?"

"Yes. Poor Adela! She married him,—a man beneath her every way. I believe she led a wretched life. He was a desperate gambler, and went from bad to worse. As far as I was able to ascertain any thing about them, I heard casually that soon after her death — she died within two years of her marriage — he left this country, which I fancy had become rather too hot to hold him."

"What was his name?"

"His *real* name, I imagine, was Telford; at least that was the name she took as his wife. But such a rascal has as many aliases as there are towns in the four quarters of the globe."

"Uncle," said Tom, after a pause, and having come to a sudden determination, "suppose"— he hesitated. He had made the plunge, and was recovering his breath after the first shock.

"Well," said Uncle Fubsby, kindly. He instinctively felt what was coming.

"Suppose," went on Tom, bravely, "I had fallen in love with the girl whose portrait you've seen; and suppose," he continued rather bashfully, — "suppose her to be in love with me; and suppose her in every thing but the accident of her birth to be my equal, for she is well read, writes beautifully, plays and sings like an angel and in fact she is charming"—

"Well," said his uncle.

"Well," returned Tom, who, now the difficulties of the plunge were over, was, so to speak, swimming about at his ease, "if she

were all this, would you object to my marrying her, uncle?"

His relative drew a long breath, shut his eyes, opened them, and then delivered himself oracularly:—

"My dear boy, where would be the use of my objecting? No; were she all you say, I should be compelled to own you had found a gem deserving the best setting possible. The only question is, how do you know you *have* found such a gem?"

"I wish you could see her for yourself."

"She is at Buddlecombe, is she not?"

"Yes."

"Ah! then that settles the question. I can't go there; no more can you at present. If after another week we hear nothing about an action for assault and battery, *then* you might run down; or if the idiot is advised by some pettifogging country attorney who wants business, and proceeds against me, you might then go down and compromise."

"Good," replied his nephew, taking up his hat. He was off to a certain post-office, to see if there were any letters for "T. L. To be left till called for."

"Whatever's the result," said Uncle Fubsby, "there's one consolation for me, and that is you're not going to marry a Speckleburry."

"By Jove, uncle!" exclaimed Tom.

"What is it?"

"What is it?" returned Tom. "Why, it's Lionel Minniver's wedding day. Don't you remember we had an invitation for it?"

"Ah! I wish him joy. Thank goodness, no one knows we're in town."

"It's just about time for him to be turned off," observed Tom, looking at his watch. "Eleven-thirty. I envy him, — but don't envy him his wife. *Au revoir.*"

And off he went to the post-office.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SPECKLEBURY WEDDING. — WHAT HAPPENED AT ST. VIGO'S. — A GREAT SENSATION.

It was a great day for the Specklebury family. It was a great day for the Specklebury's servants, for the linkman and the waterman at the nearest cabstand, for the neighboring public-houses, for any number of bait and livery stables within ten miles of town. It was a great day for the florists who served the Speckleburys', for the Specklebury's butcher, baker, candlestick-maker ; and a good thing, in fact, for trade generally was this marriage of Old Specklebury's daughter.

It was *not* such a great day for Minniver. There were not many Minnivers to be collected together, most of the family having been long ago gathered together sociably in the family vault, — that is, if the family had a vault, — and young Minniver was, with the

exception of one elderly relative, the sole representative of the Minniver money.

Lionel Minniver felt uncommonly nervous. He had not been made happier by Fred Kerrick, who, on the previous day, had paid him what that eminent practical joker termed a visit of condolence.

Fred Kerrick had, moreover, offered to bet ten to one against Lionel Minniver's being married on this particular day. This bet had been more freely offered than taken, and not a few intimate friends, lately members of the once celebrated Lodge of Wideawakes, were looking forward to a something about to happen, not particularly to Mr. Minniver's advantage, — but what it would be they hadn't the slightest idea.

One of them, indeed, thinking it too bad (whatever the intended practical joke might be) of Mr. Kerrick to interfere on such an "auspicious occasion," as of course some one would term it in a breakfast-speech, took upon himself to send Mr. Specklebury that sort of mysterious communication which Lord Monteagle is popularly supposed to have re-

ceived from Tresham anent the Guy Fawkes affair, simply saying: —

DEAR SIR, — Look out! Minniver's Marriage. Something up somewhere. Don't be alarmed. When this you see, remember me.

A WELL WISHER.

P.S. — Burn it.

Mr. Specklebury was not the man to be bothered by an anonymous letter. Accustomed, as has been hinted, to lay down the law, state his opinion precisely, and then stand by it whatever it was, he decided that this was merely impudence, and meant nothing.

Having thoroughly convinced himself of this, he exercised what he called his Strong Will, and banished the subject from his Great Mind.

Unfortunately, the subject would not consent to be thus exiled, but, having found a congenial host and a comfortable home, kept cropping up all through the night; so that Mr. Specklebury got no sleep to speak of, except exactly at the very moment when he ought to have been getting up, when he fell into the

most childlike, healthy slumber, and was consequently very nearly being late for church.

This flurried him. Moreover, he had in consequence of this letter forgotten to wind up his watch overnight, and the watch, taking advantage of this admirable opportunity for a day's rest, stopped its works; so that Mr. Specklebury, on being roused in a hurry, and taking one quick glance at its open countenance, was satisfied that a good deal of fuss was being made about nothing, as it was only just nine o'clock, and there was all the morning before him. Having arrived at this conclusion, he lay in bed considering what his next move should be, when he ought to have been in the drawing-room, with his white gloves on, and his nosegay in his button-hole, marshalling the procession for church.

Somebody ran up and rapped at his door, shouting that it was just eleven o'clock. Mr. Specklebury put his watch to his ear, and discovered how he had been deceived by his old and faithful servant.

Having to dash up, and into his clothes anyhow, he cut himself shaving; and this caused another delay.

In the mean time, Fred Kerrick had not been idle. The Kemps were in town. He had advised them, before having recourse to law, to prove their case, and interfere with the marriage of that double-dyed deceiver, Minniver, and insist on heavy compensation.

Johnny Kemp was less anxious about this than about finding out the old gentleman who had very nearly been the death of him by water. He had water on the brain, and, though his wife had tried her best to make him clearly understand her aim and object in coming up to town, he had got so muddled between his own grievance and Alice's, — or rather, as *she* was an unwilling witness, his wife's, — and his weak head being, moreover, entirely turned by the turmoil of London, he scarcely knew who he was, or what he was there for. He was in a hopeless, helpless, dreamy state; but, like a mesmeric subject, he was docile when acted upon by a superior will. That will was his wife's: when she commanded, he obeyed; and she was only carrying out the instructions of her legal adviser, who, *pro tempore*, was Mr. Frederick Kerrick.

Alice could scarcely utter a syllable. She did not believe that Tom Lennard had deceived her. She did not believe that he had assumed a false name. And yet what *did* she believe on this matter? She did not know. She was in a dream. She thought that somehow she might see Tom Lennard in London, — everybody meets everybody, she had heard, in London, — and she felt sure that then every thing would be explained. But on the other hand, Why had he left that letter signed Minniver? And why had he so suddenly and unaccountably disappeared from Buddlecombe? Her aunt — Mrs. Kemp — would not lose sight of her, and by previous arrangement with Mr. Kerrick the whole party of the Kemps found themselves seated in one of the front pews of St. Vigo-the-less, which was profusely decked out for the great Specklebury wedding.

The church was gradually filling, and then they waited and waited for the service to commence.

Three times the organ, excited thereto by a false alarm, played the first five bars of the

"Wedding March," and then left off with a wheeze.

Three times the beadle rushed in to say they were coming, and then out again to find they were not.

The clergyman was beginning to think of a nap, and the bridegroom elect was in an agony on the doorstep with his best man trying to be funny, and the crowd making facetious remarks.

At this juncture Tom Lennard, not having found any letters at the post-office, was sauntering in the direction of St. Vigo's, when he was attracted by the crowd, and suddenly called to mind Minniver's wedding. He made his way through the throng, and, while he was cordially greeting his agitated friend, the clock struck a quarter to twelve, and, post-haste, up drove the bridal cortege.

Hustle and bustle then became the order, or rather the disorder, of the day.

The best man got into an altercation with a butcher, and the bridegroom was lost among some poor relations. Mr. Specklebury, furious and fussy, handed one of the bride's-maids up

The bridegroom elect was in an agony on the doorstep, with his best man, trying to be funny, and the crowd making facetious remarks.

the aisle by mistake, and his sister, Dolly's maiden aunt, was discovered fainting in the beadle's arms near the font.

Tom Lennard found himself shoved suddenly forward, and walking side by side with the bride, as the organ went into the "Wedding March" with all the exuberant joy of being right at last.

The clergyman was waiting in surplice; the clerk was looking at his watch.

Alice could not repress a start. It was true, then. True that he was false! Mrs. Kemp saw her turn pale, and asked rapidly, "Which is him?"

Alice could only point at Tom Lennard, who was walking with Miss Specklebury in her bridal dress, and doing his best to excuse his presence at her side. She, overcome with excitement and the novelty of the situation, was obliged to cling to his arm and support herself.

As the space got wider on their nearing the rails, Minniver, in a dishevelled condition, urged on by his best man, contrived to substitute himself for Lennard; who thereupon

backed himself into the vestry, and, with the help of sixpence and a friendly pew-opener, managed to get into the open air by a side door.

This change was, amid all the bustle, unperceived by the Kemp party, — of whom Johnny was staring about three parts daft, Alice was in tears, and Mrs. Kemp was having what the Americans call "a difficulty" with the lawful owner of the pew in which they were sitting.

The curate was of a nervous temperament, and under some considerable apprehension as to the legality of a marriage contracted after noon. He had a vague idea of an ecclesiastical tradition on the subject, and, considering it safer to be on the windy side of twelve o'clock, he started, so to speak, at a hand-canter through the service. But his conscience pulled him up, and, in the absence of his rector (whom he would have assisted, had not that reverend gentleman been suffering from a severe attack of bilious cold), he thought that at all events the admonitory portions of the service ought to be delivered *ore rotundo.*

So, having read the paragraph commencing "Secondly" in a low voice, as best suited to the subject, he put on full vocal power for "Thirdly," and delivered the final portion in so impressive a style as to send a shiver up the backs of the ordinary members of his congregation. "Therefore," he read, "if any man can show any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace."

"Evidently," thought Mrs. Kemp, in a perfect fever of excitement, "it's now or never;" and therewith she treated Johnny, who was staring up at nothing in the gallery, to so sharp and savage a pinch, that he gave a great jump and a loud shriek simultaneously.

The congregation was electrified.

Prompted by his wife, Johnny cried out, "I forbid the banns!"

Every one was thunder-struck.

The clerk stared wildly about him; so did the curate. The bride fainted; the bridegroom shook so that he couldn't support her; Mr. Specklebury came out with an oath; his

spinster sister had fits; the beadle's temperature went up to a hundred and twenty: and Mrs. Kemp led Johnny forward, and, making a courtesy to the clergyman, desired to be at once conducted to the vestry.

And just at this moment the clock struck twelve, and all prospect of the wedding was over for that day.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH ARE THE EXPLANATIONS. — THE WINDING-UP ACT. — AND THE GENERAL EXIT.

TOM LENNARD had got out of the vestry door, but the iron gate of the yard without was locked.

He retraced his steps to the vestry, in the hope of finding the old pew-opener with the key.

Nearing the vestry, he became aware of a great disturbance going on within.

Presently he distinctly heard his own name mentioned, and then a voice which he would have recognized anywhere sobbed out, "Yes, he promised me to marry me, and we were told he was going to marry somebody else, this gay lady ; so they brought me here."

" He's a villain," said some one, emphasizing it with a thump on the table. It was Mrs. Kemp.

"He was here just now," said Minniver.

"Here!" cried Mr. Specklebury. "Then let him step forward, and I'll soon show him" —

Tom opened the door, and presented himself.

In a few words he explained.

The Specklebury party had nothing to say.

The Kemp family had a great deal to say. Where was their adviser, Mr. Kerrick?

Gone. But into Mrs. Kemp's hands he had slipped a note, written hastily, in which he begged them, should they have happened to have made a mistake in this instance, to go at once to his old lodgings (he enclosed the address), where they would find the real offender; namely, one Mr. Fubsby.

Tom Lennard understood, and attempted to make Mr. Specklebury understand, too (a very difficult task), that they had all been the victims of a practical joker, who had been rejected by Mr. Specklebury, and been turned out of his rooms by Uncle Fubsby.

Mr. Specklebury's threats of actions were something awful; but, as he had no exact

legal knowledge on the subject of practical joking, he thought it would be advisable to go home and consult a law dictionary, where, under the head of *J—Joke*, and *P—Practical*, he might discover with what pains and penalties the perpetrator could be visited.

Mrs. Kemp, pacified to a certain extent, would not let either Tom Lennard or Alice out of her sight. Nothing would satisfy her but an interview with Mr. Fubsby, and a formal declaration of honorable intentions by Tom Lennard, in the presence of his respectable relative.

Thither, therefore, the party proceeded.

Uncle Fubsby was enjoying a snooze when they entered.

Tom broke the matter to him gradually; fortunately, the ground had been already cleared in the conversation that morning.

Uncle Fubsby made one stipulation: the parents must be kept out of the way. However, he would see them first, and then Tom should introduce Alice.

No sooner did Johnny appear, than Mr. Fubsby started back as if he'd been shot.

"This is a plant — this is a plot," he cried.

Johnny was furious. Here was the man who had tried to drown him, had kicked him into the water. He was for falling on him there and then; but Mrs. Kemp gave him so sharp a reminder with her elbow in the ribs as deprived him of breath for the next minute or so, during which time Mrs. Kemp explained that they had no other object in seeking Mr. Fubsby than the good of their child, Alice; "who," she added, "though none of theirs, had always been brought up by them as their own, and was to be dealt with as fairly and honorably as any lady in the land, as she came of a good stock she dared swear, and had had no expense spared on her in eddication, though she (Mrs. Kemp herself) warn't no scholard."

The fear of law being taken away from Uncle Fubsby's eyes, he professed himself, first of all, willing to compensate John Kemp for the loss of his time, for his trouble, and any damage done to his clothes, and requested that Alice might be presented to him.

She came, looking lovely, the very double

Johnny was furious. Here was the man who had tried to drown him, — had kicked him into the water.

of Uncle Fubsby's miniature. Mrs. Kemp's story was a short one. A lady, deserted by her husband, had come to Buddlecombe. Mrs. Kemp had tended her, had become attached to the helpless child; and, after its mother's death, had reared it as her own. That was Alice's history.

"You remember the lady's name?" asked Uncle Fubsby, deeply interested, as well he might be.

"Telford, sir; we have some of her things by us now, marked A. T."

"Adela Telford," sighed Uncle Fubsby. "Poor thing! Poor thing!"

Then he brightened up; and, with that, the rest of the party became as happy as joy and hope could make them.

Johnny and Mrs. Kemp were amply provided for, you may depend upon that; and within a very few days there was a quiet, unobtrusive, cheerful, bright wedding down in the country — not a hundred miles from Buddlecombe — when Johnny Kemp did *not* forbid the banns; but for then and for ever after held his peace, while Mrs. Kemp talked.

Tom Lennard and his pretty wife live in a picturesque cottage built for them by Uncle Fubsby, who takes his exercise regularly, and has never again since that awful shock been troubled by his old enemy the gout.

Considering that eminent practical joker, Mr. Kerrick, the cause of his present health and happiness, Uncle Fubsby insisted upon making a friend of him, and on letting him some rooms in a first-class situation (all the Fubsby property is in first-class situations, the eligible sites of years since), at something like half their usual rent. And Mr. Kerrick had the satisfaction of learning that Mrs. Minniver, *née* Specklebury, showed a fearful temper, which broke out like a rash in the first week of their honeymoon, and had never gone in again. Mr. Specklebury's time is occupied in reading up the Law of Divorce and Separation, and in giving his son-in-law legal and parental advice.

And thus we dismiss all the *dramatis personæ* from this tale, and drop the curtain on A TRIP TO BUDDLECOMBE.

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